

# NATURALLY

THE CONOCOHEAGUE AUDUBON SOCIETY

Naturally

NEWSLETTER OF THE CONOCOHEAGUE AUDUBON SOCIETY

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## In This Issue:

Page 2 Conservation Corner:  
Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful;  
On the Record  
Page 3 CBC Plans  
Page 4 and 5 The Big Sit!  
Page 6 Calendar



Above, Chestnut-sided Warbler on Redbud, September 1.

Below, Black-throated Green Warbler

Photo credits: Bob Keener



## President's Corner

by Valerie B. Barnes

Fall migrants are still passing through. A Swainson's Thrush and a Gray-cheeked Thrush stopped by to eat berries in my backyard. They didn't appear simultaneously, but were close enough in time to give me pause and make me look really carefully. The Swainson's face was definitely buffy and the Gray-cheeked's was not.

As we've wrapped up the 2023-2024 volunteer season and started the 2024-2025 season, let's give a huge "Thank you" to all those who stepped up and represented Conococheague Audubon at various community events. Terri Kochert leads the effort. We wouldn't be "out there" without her. If you would like to help at some future event, please contact Terri at 717-263-3692 or [terri.kochert81@gmail.com](mailto:terri.kochert81@gmail.com).

The Chambersburg Area Christmas Bird Count (CBC) will be held on December 14. See the article later in this newsletter for details. We'll award Youth Contest prizes for Best Bird Photo and Longest Bird List at our November 11 meeting. The window for observing birds and taking photos for the next contest starts in December.

We've posted three policies approved by the Executive Committee and Board of Directors on our website. See the "[Constitution & By Laws, Policies](#)" page under CAS Publications and Data for Anti-Discrimination/Anti-Harassment, Conflict of Interest (for the Executive Committee and Board of Directors), and Youth Protection Policies.

If you haven't already done so, please consider donating to Conococheague Audubon to keep things rolling. Mail your donation to CAS at PO Box 20, Fayetteville, PA 17222. We would like to hear from you about why you joined Audubon. Send your response to [ConAudubon@outlook.com](mailto:ConAudubon@outlook.com) and we'll publish it in a future edition of the *Naturally*. Good birding!

## Why I Joined Audubon

From Susan Donaldson: The reason I joined Conococheague Audubon is to learn more about birds. But being a member and volunteering at the Native Garden has given me a passion for native plants. It is exciting to see the plants in bloom and find pollinators using the flowers. It is a plus when a bird visits the flowers or seed heads.



(Note: this could be a regular column, if you all send entries to [ConAudubon@outlook.com](mailto:ConAudubon@outlook.com). We'll publish one in each issue, as long as we get submissions.)

# CONSERVATION

ORNER



by John Greer

## Reflections on the Value of Service from the Inaugural Adopt-A-Highway Cleanup Day

For some time as Conservation Chair, I have been looking for ways to put intentions into action. On Saturday, September 28, 2024, I witnessed a tremendous outpouring of conservation spirit displayed by volunteers who braved iffy weather to pick up trash along our adopted portion of Route 997.

Many thanks go to Greg von Schmid, Anne St. John, Sue Greer, Joe Miller, Vanessa Miller, Jeff Schmaltz, Rhetta Martin, and Lisa Coombs. These individuals put into action the ideals from our charter: “to protect wilderness areas, refuges, and parks; to encourage good use of nature's storehouse of resources; and to open the eyes of young and old that all may enjoy the beauty of the outdoor world and share in conserving its wonders forever.” They worked tirelessly, without complaining, to make a small piece of our local community cleaner and healthier. Rather than just reading and talking about helping the environment, they did something about it. In four hours, they removed 37 large bags of trash.

This experience gave me pause to reflect on the many ways we can put conservation intentions into action. We all have different gifts, and my point is we should make a concerted effort to use them. Our club, our community, and our environment will be better for it.

For example, not every member may have the physical stamina to do highway cleanup work, and that is OK. There was a lot of effort involved because it was evident trash had not been picked up for some time. Our Spring Clean-Up Day is March 8, 2025, on the same portion of road. It should proceed much faster and more easily. Still, as the saying goes, “many hands make light work,” so please consider coming out if you are able.

But your gifts may lie elsewhere. If you are not already actively engaged in sharing your gifts for the good of the environment, I encourage you to find a way to do so. Many species of birds are in decline due to a number of conservation challenges. These include climate change, habitat loss, window strikes, and pollution. Things will not get better unless we work to make them better. I will try over the next few weeks to identify ways we can actively make a difference in our conservation efforts.



CAS adopts a highway

Photo credit: John Greer

And I ask for your help. Be creative. Speak out. Sign up. Join in. Share ideas. Talk to your friends and neighbors about the importance of protecting birds and their habitats. Remember to cut pollution by reducing, refusing, reusing, recycling, and removing plastics. Corner an officer, director, or committee chair about ways you can become involved in conservation efforts. I urge you to put your gifts to good use -- the birds will thank you for it.

## On the Record

by Sue Greer

Our two field trips this fall yielded nine species of warblers! Nine participants observed nine warbler species in the Heisey Orchard / Michaux State Forest area. Among those seen were the Hooded Warbler, Cape May Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, and Black-throated Green Warbler. A Bald Eagle was also seen for the first time.

Four new species of warblers were seen by 14 participants on the Cumberland Valley Rail Trail field trip – Tennessee and Pine Warblers, Common Yellowthroat, and Northern Parula.

# Local Christmas Bird Counts

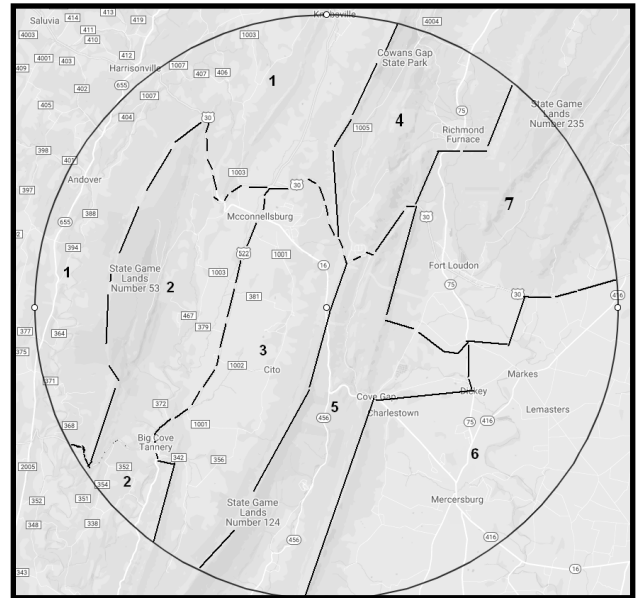
by Valerie B. Barnes

There are two local CBCs: The 65<sup>th</sup> Chambersburg area Christmas Bird Count is on Saturday, December 14, 2024, and the 4<sup>th</sup> Buchanan Trail Franklin/Fulton Counties CBC is on Tuesday, December 17, 2024.

Christmas Bird Counts help Audubon to assess the health of bird populations and guide conservation action. You can start counting just after midnight on the count day; owls sometimes sound off in the wee hours of the morning. We need volunteers to count every bird for these projects. Each CBC is conducted in a designated 15-mile diameter circle. Zone Captains / Area Leaders organize volunteers in different sections of the circles.

Valerie Barnes (717-352-4397 or [BarnesVa4@comcast.net](mailto:BarnesVa4@comcast.net)) is the compiler for the Chambersburg area CBC. Vern Gauthier (717-385-9526 or [verngauthier14@gmail.com](mailto:verngauthier14@gmail.com)) is the compiler for the Buchanan Trail CBC, which is in the western part of Franklin County and the eastern part of Fulton County.

If you are new to the count this year or have a new phone number or email address, please contact the compiler. If you live inside the circle and want to start counting birds at your feeders for the first time, contact the compiler. If you've participated before, your Zone Captain/Area Leader should contact you, probably after Thanksgiving. If he or



Buchanan Trail CBC Circle

she doesn't, feel free to contact the compiler and she/he will help you make the connection.

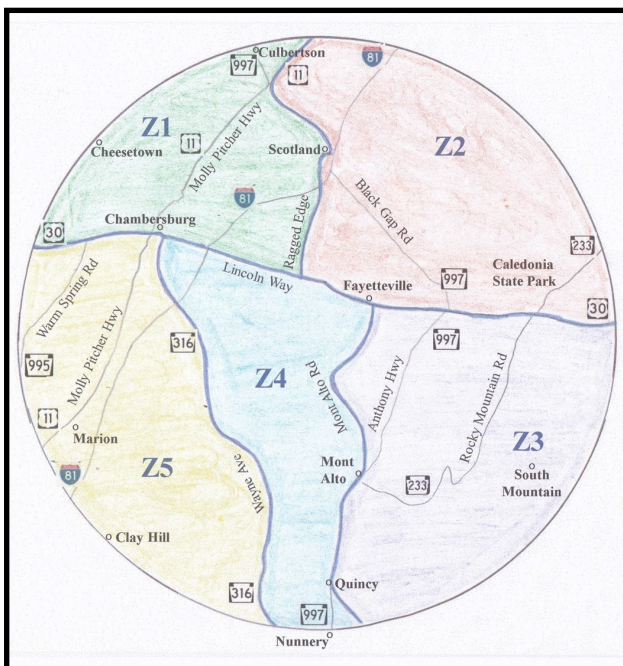
Forms used by observers for the Chambersburg area CBC will be available from the Zone Captains or download from our website, along with a detailed map of the circle. The files will be accessible from the December 14 calendar page for the Chambersburg Area CBC event.

Forms used by observers for the Buchanan Trail Franklin/Fulton CBC will be provided by Vern Gauthier to Area Leaders and Feeder Counters. Vern requests that all new participants contact him by November 26.

Please help! The length of time you count is up to you. The Christmas Bird Count is fun and you never know what you might see. Make it a family affair! Note that if the weather forecast calls for really bad weather, we may try to reschedule the count; your Zone Captain / Area Leader will contact you if that happens.

There will be no tally dinner this year. Zone Captains / Area Leaders will still collect results and provide them to the compiler.

National Audubon asks for donations to support the CBC. If you would like to donate toward the expense of the count, donations may be given to any Zone Captain, Area Leader, compiler, or the treasurer. Please make your check out to CAS and note it is a donation for the CBC; mail to CAS, PO Box 20, Fayetteville, PA 17222. Audubon appreciates your support.



Chambersburg Area CBC Circle



Fall

Photo credit: John Carter

## Wings over Meadow Grounds Lake: Big Sit

by John Carter

On October 13, 2024, I decided to complete a Birding Big Sit at Meadow Grounds Lake (MGL), Fulton County, Pennsylvania. A few weeks before the event, I scouted out my location, searching for a spot that would offer three key elements essential for an enjoyable day of birding:

**1. Diverse Habitat:** I needed a variety of environments to attract a wide range of species. MGL offered just that, with its mix of young and mature forest, a grassy section bursting with goldenrods and other native plants, a body of water for waterfowl, and an open skyline perfect for spotting migrating raptors.



Location, location

Photo credit: John Carter

**2. Tranquility:** I wanted a remote location with minimal traffic noise, not only to better hear chip notes and songs but also to escape the hustle of suburban life. The quiet of Meadow Grounds Lake allowed for uninterrupted birding and peaceful immersion in nature.

**3. Scenic Beauty:** Since I would be spending around 8 hours at this spot, the view needed to be as enjoyable as the birding itself. The stunning landscape surrounding the lake provided the perfect backdrop for a day spent observing both the birds and the changing autumn scenery.

### So, what is a Big Sit?

It is a relaxed yet rewarding birding event where participants choose a single spot within a designated circle (17 feet in diameter), and spend the day observing as many bird species as possible from that location. Set against the backdrop of nature's sights and sounds, it's a test of patience, keen observation, and identification skills, as birders watch the avian world pass by, often taking note of migratory species, local residents, and seasonal visitors—all while enjoying the simplicity of staying in one place. It's birding in its purest form.



Goldfinches flitted about

Photo credit: John Carter

I arrived at my location just after 6 A.M., setting up shop with a cup of vanilla-flavored coffee in hand, hoping to hear a few owls. An Eastern Screech Owl trilled softly in the distance for a brief moment, but that was the extent of my owl encounters. Before long, however, the morning air began to fill with the melodies of awakening birds stretching their vocal cords.

During the day, I was delighted by a surprise visit from a Pine Siskin, while the air was filled with the cheerful chatter of American Goldfinches flitting about. Tiny Kinglets traversed through the branches, and I marveled at the presence of six woodpecker species. Adding to the vibrant scene, Magnolia and Yellow-rumped Warblers added splashes of color, each contributing to the rich diversity of species observed.

Among the brush and reeds, sparrows danced through the autumn brush, each with its own tune—White-throated’s soft whistle, Savannah’s delicate streaks, Song’s familiar jingle, and the rare glimpse of a Lincoln’s, while Swamp, Chipping, and Field sparrows darted in and out of view, joined by the striking flash of the Eastern Towhee, its rust-red sides blending perfectly with the season’s colors.

Above us and along the mountain ridges, the sky was alive with movement—a constant flow of migrating raptors riding the autumn thermals. Black and Turkey Vultures circled lazily, while Bald Eagles soared with regal grace. Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks cut through the air, their broad wings powerful against the blue expanse. An Osprey glided low, scanning the lake, and a Northern Harrier skimmed the treetops with ease. Among them, a lone Sharp-shinned Hawk darted through the flock, quick and precise, each bird a fleeting part of the seasonal rhythm.

Despite the incredible variety of birds that filled the day, a few notable species eluded me. I watched the lake’s shimmering surface, but the familiar silhouette of a Double-crested Cormorant never appeared. The graceful Great Blue Heron, often a fixture along the water’s edge, was absent, and the Belted Kingfisher, with its sharp call and diving acrobatics, was strangely quiet. These were the ones that got away on an otherwise unforgettable Big Sit.



*Monarch*

Photo credit: John Carter

The day began with a cool 52-degree morning, gradually warming up to a pleasant 77 by the time we wrapped up. Along with the birds, a few other

sightings and interactions made the day memorable. I counted four Monarch Butterflies gracefully passing through, adding a touch of fall color to the landscape. On the lake, 12 kayakers paddled by, and three fishermen with electric motorboats quietly worked the waters.

On the less enjoyable side, I squished eight invasive Spotted Lanternflies as they tried to join the party. But the best part of the day was the friendly conversations with fellow visitors. A few different groups stopped to have their fall pictures taken, capturing the vibrant scenery. I also chatted with people walking or fishing by the lake, talking about the bird tailgate I was doing. Later in the afternoon, another couple joined with their lawn chairs, hoping to catch sight of eagles soaring above. The blend of nature and community made the Big Sit even more special.

The Wings over Meadow Grounds wrapped up the Big Sit with a total of 58 bird species, each one adding a unique note to the symphony of the day. From the early morning songs to the raptors soaring overhead, every sighting made those hours in the circle well worth the wait.

## Conococheague Audubon Society

PRESENTS A FREE NATURE FILM

### “Islands of Wonder: Madagascar” A PBS Nature film



**THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2024**

**|| FILM BEGINS - 7PM ||**

Chambersburg Area Middle School South  
1151 E. McKinley St.,  
Chambersburg, PA, 17201

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

**Door Prizes**

**Donations Welcome!**

**MEETINGS – Free**, held at Fellowship Hall, St. Luke Evangelical Lutheran Church, 2695 Luther Drive, Chambersburg, PA 17202.

**FIELD TRIPS – Free**, most take place on Saturdays. Contact the leader; arrive early.

**Year-round**

**BIRD WALKS**

SOAR (Studying Ornithology Around the Region) walks, 8:00 AM first and third Saturdays; various locations in Franklin County.

Larry and Sharon Williams, 717-655-7414; see <https://buttonwoodnaturecenter.org> for schedule. 717-762-0373

**Nov. 11, Monday**

**MEETING**

7:00 PM Youth Contest Winners announced tonight. "*Breeding Bird Surveys in our National Parks: Catoctin's Top Ten*" by Becky Loncosky. Arranged by Lisa Coombs.

**November 14, Thursday at CAMS**

**FILM**

7:00 PM *Islands of Wonder: Madagascar*, PBS. Door prizes.

**Dec. 9, Monday**

**MEETING**

7:00 pm *Diversity in the Andes*, by Terri Kochert and Debby Hook. Spectacular plumage at all altitudes is a key to ecotourism in Colombia and Ecuador.

**Dec. 14, Saturday**

**CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT**

All day, Chambersburg area (PACH). Valerie Barnes, | 717-352-4397.

**Dec. 17, Tuesday**

**CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT**

All day, Franklin/Fulton Counties (PABT). Vern Gauthier, 717-385-9526, [verngauthier14@gmail.com](mailto:verngauthier14@gmail.com).

**Dec 28, 2024, Saturday**

**CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT**

All day, Newville area. Vern Gauthier, 717-385-9526, [verngauthier14@gmail.com](mailto:verngauthier14@gmail.com).

**Dec. 30, Monday**

**CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT**

All day, York Springs area. Tim Johnson, 717-409-4805, [tj359@sbcglobal.net](mailto:tj359@sbcglobal.net).

**January 13, 2025 Monday**

**MEETING**

**6:00 PM** Covered dish dinner and members' photo show. All are welcome.

**January 16, Thursday at CAMS**

**FILM**

7:00 PM *Woodpeckers: The Hole Story*, PBS. Door prizes.

Check our website for updates and maps to all locations:

**CAS WEBSITE:** <https://conococheagueaudubon.org/>

**Newsletter Editor** - Jane Bussard (717-401-3210) [janenbussard47@gmail.com](mailto:janenbussard47@gmail.com)

**Send all newsletter articles and photos to the editor.**

**Send all mailing changes to [conaudubon@outlook.com](mailto:conaudubon@outlook.com).**

**COPY DEADLINE DECEMBER 15 FOR JANUARY 2025 NEWSLETTER**

**CONOCOCHÉAGUE AUDUBON OFFICERS:**

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John Carter, Dave Ebbitt, Jim Hook, Anne St. John, Larry Williams, Sharon Williams

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Conococheague Audubon  
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Fayetteville, PA 17222